

Climate Conference
Welcome and podium script
King County Executive Ron Sims
8 a.m. through 12:30 p.m.
October 27, 2005

Welcome to the King County 2005 Climate Change Conference.

When I look at all of you I am in awe. When we started planning this conference, we knew there was a need to start talking about what we need to do to prepare, but we were knocked out by the response! We planned for 500, then squeezed in another 100 and then another 70 or so. We've had to turn people away. We just did not have enough room!

I want to thank our many sponsors for helping us make this conference a reality. There obviously is a need and we couldn't have done it without sponsors.

Your presence speaks loudly about the importance of addressing climate change. As our program says "The Future Ain't What it Used to be." And we better change the way we think in response. We accept that the climate is changing, and we can't stop it so we must prepare. It is a critical issue for King County, and all the communities in the State of Washington, and for the entire world. That's why we opened this conference to a statewide audience. Whether it is the Olympic Peninsula, the Palouse or the Puget Sound Region, we all face major challenges and hard work ahead as we plan for our future.

The hardening consensus among climate experts is that global warming is for real and will have major impacts across on the globe. Our region will not be immune. In fact, given our close proximity to major water bodies, the impact here in the Puget Sound could well be greater than in other places.

We expect water levels in the Sound to rise significantly. That means greater flooding risk for our low-lying areas. We expect the snow caps and glaciers in our mountains to shrink and retreat. That means drought conditions in our summers, and potential shortages of drinkable water.

What about irrigation and drinking water needs on both sides of the Cascades? What happens to our forests, our fishing and agriculture industries and what is the resulting impact on the rest of the state's economy.

That is why we have to act – before it is too late. Today, we seek to open another front on the fight against global warming. Our prevention efforts have been in full swing for some time, but unfortunately that is not enough. Given the reality of climate change, we know there will be serious impacts on our way of life. Simply stated: some climate impacts are inevitable. But we also know that we can head off much of the potentially disastrous impacts by being prepared.

As for the full spectrum of global warming impacts, we can both prevent the worst of global warming from happening in the future, and prepare for those impacts we can anticipate.

I would like to remind everyone why we are here today. The goal of the conference is to start a dialogue. But talk is not enough. We need to work out a concrete series of actions we can take to mitigate the damage climate change will have. We know that today we will not have all the answers. But this is an excellent start.

I want to thank the State of Washington, which has agreed to help coordinate on-going activities. I believe we will hear more about this from Jay Manning, director of the State Department of Ecology. Jay is chairing the afternoon plenary session.

While today is about climate change impacts and potential “adaptations” or “preparedness,” we also know that reducing greenhouse gas emissions is still our #1 priority.

We must reduce greenhouse gases as fast as we can to ensure global warming does not spin dangerously out of control. The world-renowned climate scientist Dr. Stephen Schneider will speak to this directly in just a moment.

As County Executive, I know that if I am going to prioritize a climate change agenda, then we must have our own house in order.

We are making important strides in three key areas: preserving forest lands, reducing methane emissions from garbage and sewage, reducing vehicle greenhouse gas emissions, and reclaiming wastewater.

Preserving green space has been a priority of mine since I became Executive nine years ago. Back then, King County had only 25,000 acres of such land under permanent protection. Now that figure is more than 125,000 acres, and I have made a commitment to conserve in perpetuity 100,000 more acres by 2010.

We can have growth and development while we make strides in protecting our environment. It takes thought, and it takes careful planning, but we are committed to doing that here in King County, and I believe there are many here in the audience today who can offer their personal testimonies regarding our many successes on that front.

In King County and Washington State, transportation is our number one source of greenhouse gas emissions, primarily from personal automobiles. There are two ways to reduce transportation emissions: clean cars and fewer cars. We've done both.

King County has been working for decades to help take cars off the road by:

- Operating the largest bus system in the Pacific Northwest,
- Leading on growth management and
- Buying development rights to preserve greenspace and our rural areas

The County has been cleaning up its tailpipe emissions by

- Purchasing more hybrid buses and cars than any other government of its size.—235 hybrid buses and 140 hybrid cars
- By incorporating biodiesel into our Metro bus and Solid Waste fleets—we are the largest user of biodiesel in the state
- And by fighting for tough tailpipe standards in Olympia

I hope you saw our hybrid and biodiesel buses when you arrived today. I'm proud of Metro's role as a national leader in adopting new and cleaner sources of energy.

In addition to measures addressing tailpipe emissions, the County has been at the forefront of pushing cleaner, more efficient, and alternative sources of energy. To name just a few of our initiatives, the County's work on energy includes:

- The largest landfill gas-to-energy project in our region.
- One of the largest wastewater fuel cell projects in the world
- Upgrades to our wastewater treatment systems to capture more energy and use it on-site
- Establishing Green Building standard for our buildings
- Implementing efficiency upgrades for our facilities, and
- Exploring manure digesters on the Enumclaw Plateau

King County has been a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. And as we begin to act on new fronts, the County will be a leader in preparing for climate change impacts.

We have learned that much of the activities that the County has traditionally pioneered are the same actions that can help us hedge against potentially dangerous climate change impacts.

For example:

- Award winning flood plain management
- Extensive salmon recovery efforts
- Preserving ecologically crucial lands by buying development rights, and
- Preparing for shortages of water resources

That final category is particularly import for us here in the central Puget Sound region. It may seem counterintuitive given that we live so close to so many water bodies, but our scientists are telling us that we are facing a future of serious droughts if things proceed on their current course.

Our drinking water supply, particularly during the summer months, is drawn from snow melt in the mountains. But we know now that our snow caps and glaciers are shrinking, and will shrink further as temperatures rise. That means less water available than we need.

That is why we are developing what we call the reuse backbone system to reclaim a huge quantity of wastewater for industrial uses. We have proposed spending \$26 million to create this system, which will develop a drought-proof source of water, and which will allow us to save, for human consumption, drinking-quality water that is now used for so many other things.

I know there is more that King County can do, and I promise you today that we will do them. This is just too important an issue to ignore. We must be prudent, but we must also be bold.

Now is the time for all of us to recognize the magnitude of this issue. We must band together to promote the solutions that we know exist.

I am confident that if we do so, our collective efforts can and will be stronger than the destructiveness of global warming.

When you leave today, we want you to leave with information, insight and lastly, but most importantly, energy to tackle this daunting issue.

(hopefully it is about 8:15 a.m. and you introduce the first speaker)

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce our first speaker. An expert and a leader on Climate Change.

We are pleased to have with us today, Dr. Stephen H. Schneider, who is a professor at Stanford University in Biological Sciences and author of a journal called "Climate Change" as well as numerous books and scientific papers. He is a Senior Fellow at the Center for Environment Science and Policy of the Institute for International Studies.

He was honored in 1992 with a MacArthur Fellowship for his ability to integrate and interpret the results of global climate research.

He has served as a consultant to Federal Agencies and the White House for every administration since Nixon and was elected to membership in the U.S. National Academy of Sciences in April 2002.

Please welcome, Dr. Stephen Schneider.

(Schneider speaks for a half hour. You can leave for your live NWCable News interview and then come back by 8:45 to introduce the next speaker)

Thank you Dr. Schneider.

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Ed Miles, who is the Virginia- and-Prentice Bloedel Professor of Marine Studies-and-Public-Affairs at the University of Washington and serves as the director of the UW's Climate Impacts Group. He has served on many scientific boards and committees and there are few people in Washington State can speak so forcefully to need to be prepared for climate impacts.

In fact, Ed and the Climate Impacts Group have been leaders on this issue for a long time. While King County seeks to raise the bar now on being prepared for our global warming impacts, Ed has been working tirelessly on climate change preparedness for years.

Please welcome Dr. Ed Miles.

(Dr. Miles and his group speak for 1.5 hours. During that time you depart for a 10 am interview at the Air America affiliate for a taped interview. Sandeep will go with you. You won't be able to introduce Terry Williams who speaks at 10:15 You need to be back by 11:30 to

meet and talk with Christie Todd Whitman in advance of an 11:45 media availability at the Stockyard Restaurant. The media Availability lasts until 12:15 p.m. You introduce Todd-Whitman for her keynote at 12:30)

11:45 a.m. Media Availability (scheduled to last a half hour)
(give a short opening statement and then open it for questions from reporters)

Welcome to the Climate Conference. We have a lot of reporters here today and many distinguished speakers. We want to give you an opportunity to ask questions of two of the out of state keynoters: John Cox, author of Climate Crash and Christine Todd-Whitman, former EPA Administrator and former governor of New Jersey.

I think the turnout today is testament to the serious situation we are all in and the belief of local governments and stakeholders that they need to take action to prepare. As I said in my welcome, in addition to preserving open space and reducing air emissions, I just last week proposed a \$26 million reclaimed water backbone system that would produce a drought-proof new water supply at a fraction of the cost of other water supply projects. That's just an example of the things that need to be happening across the nation and around the world.

We'll have Mr. Cox and Ms. Todd-Whitman would like to say a few words before opening it to questions.

(Cox speaks, Todd-Whitman speaks)

Now, we'll take questions.

[12:30 p.m. Introduce Keynote speaker Christine Todd-Whitman]

I am proud to introduce our keynote speaker. Christine Todd Whitman has spent a distinguished career in public service while serving as the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and as the 50th Governor of the State of New Jersey. She served in the Cabinet of President George W. Bush as EPA Administrator from January 2001 to June 2003 (though we won't hold that against her).

Among the noteworthy achievements of her time in office were the introduction of President Bush's Clear Skies Initiative to ensure clean air for all Americans to breathe; the establishment of a watershed-based approach to protecting our nation's lakes, streams, and rivers; and the passage of landmark brownfields legislation that is bringing economic and environmental vitality back to neighborhoods marred by abandoned industrial sites.

Under Whitman's leadership, the EPA also entered into a historic agreement to clean up the Hudson River, issued the first-ever State of the Environment Report, and for the first time required cleaner burning diesel engines for non-road vehicles such as tractors and bulldozers. I very much agree with Whitman, who believes strongly that economic success and environmental protection must go hand in hand, which is why she actively promoted partnerships and market incentives such as the Energy Star and Climate Leaders programs.

Prior to leading the EPA, Administrator Whitman served as the 50th Governor of New Jersey, the first female ever to be elected to that State's highest office. Now, please welcome Christine Todd Whitman...

Addendum

10:15 a.m.

Ron will not be able to introduce Terry Williams but here is the introduction for someone else to do.

[Intro of Terry Williams from Tulalip Tribe]

Our next speaker is Terry Williams, who has an impressive record of work on environmental causes. Since 1982, he has served as a Fisheries and Natural Resources Commissioner for the Tulalip Tribes. In this role, he directs pre-season fisheries negotiations, governmental planning and cooperative habitat management. He has served on the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, and has also represented the Tulalip Tribes on the Pacific Fisheries Management Council since 1985 and served on the Pacific Salmon Commission since 1997.

Williams served as the director of the EPA American Indian Environmental Office in Washington, D.C. from 1995 to 1996. From

2003 to 2004, Williams served as Chair of the Tribal Committee of the National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee. This year, he was a participant in the EPA Tribal Trust Program that addressed cultural sustainability via restoration and protection of endangered species.

Williams has also worked on tribal issues at the international level, including as a representative of indigenous peoples on the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity.

Williams currently serves on the Salmon Homecoming Alliance Board and the Northwest Straits Commission. He is also a member of the Snohomish Basin Salmon Recovery Forum, a multi-interest coalition that guides salmon conservation efforts in the Snohomish River basin.

Appointed by Governor Booth Gardner, Williams served from 1985 to 1995 on the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority. He also served on the board of the Center For Streamside Studies, Adopt-A-Stream Foundation and the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society. Please welcome terry Williams...